



News Release

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e-Applications Clicking for Utah Families

(Salt Lake City, Utah) – Public health programs often reach out with pamphlets, mass media messages, and direct mail resources to get across an important message. Now they have another effective tool. Utah's Children's Health Insurance Program's (CHIP) November Open Enrollment period was met with so many cyber-ready applicants, that online applications reached 45 percent of those submitted. During the two-week Open Enrollment period, 9,349 total applications were received, 4,191 of them online.

Over the years there has been some debate about the availability of computers to populations served by public health. "This shows that more and more people we serve have access to computers or the Internet. Based on the success of this effort, we will continue to use online application services driven by effective outreach messages and techniques," said Rod Betit, Executive Director, Utah Department of Health (UDOH). Providing more e-business public health resources will not replace proven and traditional forms of outreach, but e-applications provide public health one more effective tool. The UDOH still accepts applications by mail and in person and will continue to do so.

"The e-government initiative is penetrating more agencies and programs," said Rhoda Nicholas, UDOH Director of Product Strategy. "Providing an option to apply online saves numerous government resources and offers convenience to the public." These e-applications are consistent with the Governor's 1,000-Day Plan. Governor Leavitt has set an aggressive e-government goal of offering all appropriate state government services online by 2004.

The Internet is a useful tool for public health because it can provide 24-hour access. "The Internet allows many of our families who work during business hours, or live far from an eligibility office to apply for CHIP," said Amy Bingham, CHIP Program Manager.

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“With CHIP enrollment only open for two weeks in November, it was great to have the Internet so that, in less than 15 minutes, people could apply online, and not have to worry about their application arriving in time by mail.”

Utah is a tech savvy state. In a report released in 2000 from the U. S. Department of Commerce, Utah ranked first among states for computer ownership with 66 percent of households having computers; nearly half had Internet access at home. According to this report, gaps in Internet access are closing nationally between urban and rural areas, men and women, differing income levels, and racial and ethnic groups.

More than 4,000 CHIP applications have been approved from the November Open Enrollment. Currently, 8,278 children have been added to CHIP, bringing enrollment to 26,814. Applications are still being processed, and the UDOH estimates that another 354 more children may be approved. CHIP enrollment is currently closed.

Also applying online are applicants to the Primary Care Network (PCN), a health insurance program for adults who can't afford private insurance. Since PCN began in July of 2002, ten percent of applicants have submitted their applications online. Currently, 9,877 people are enrolled in PCN.

For those who do not have a computer and Internet connection at home, and who would like to apply for one of these programs online, computers are available in public libraries and Department of Workforce Services offices to assist them. For more information about these UDOH programs, visit www.health.utah.gov

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